EPA United States Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. EPA Region 8—Montana Office, Helena August 2002

♦ Milltown Reservoir Superfund Site: Update ♦

This fact sheet provides an update on the Superfund remedy selection process and related work planned or in progress at the Milltown Reservoir Sediments operable unit in and near Milltown, Montana.

Site Background

The Milltown Dam is located at the confluence of the Clark Fork and Blackfoot Rivers and adjacent to the unincorporated communities of Milltown and Bonner. The Milltown Dam was built in 1907. Over the past century, mine waste materials have washed downstream and now some 6.6 million cubic yards of sediments have accumulated behind the Milltown Dam. The Milltown Reservoir Sediments/Clark Fork River Superfund Site was listed on the NPL in 1983. Mine wastes in the sediments contain elevated concentrations of metals and arsenic. Human health risks are from arsenic-contaminated drinking water. A safe drinking water supply was provided to the immediately affected people of Milltown in 1984 to 1985, but the aquifer remains contaminated and the contamination plume is potentially unstable. There are also risks to downstream aquatic life, primarily from copper, when high flows and ice scour events (or failure of the dam) release sediments over the dam. Significant dam safety and fish passage issues have been raised about the dam.

Combined Feasibility Study

The Combined Feasibility Study (CFS) is based on previous studies—the 1996 Draft Feasibility Study and the 2001 Focused Feasibility Study—and is now complete. The CFS will be available for review later this month at the Bonner School and Missoula public libraries. For a CD-ROM version, please contact EPA.

Milltown Reservoir Draw-down

On August 5, 2002, Northwestern Energy began a draw-down of the water level in the Milltown Reservoir. The water level will be lowered a maximum of 11 feet and remain at that level for about 4 weeks. This draw-down is a collaborative effort among various agencies. During the draw-down, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will be collecting samples to measure upstream and downstream water quality and quantity, drainage of water from sediments, the amount of debris in the reservoir, and possible dredge water treatment needs. This information will be used to further refine cleanup options and costs. Similar to last year, the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) will use the draw-down to reduce the population of northern pike to help improve the Clark Fork River fishery. FWP will also be conducting a study to measure the effects of the draw-down on fish.

Remedy Selection Process

EPA is now entering a very critical part of the Superfund cleanup process: the remedy selection phase. This is also a critical time for the community and other stakeholders to be involved. The first step in this process is an internal EPA review before the National Remedy Review Board (NRRB) and Sediments Review Panel. This EPA review is required whenever a preliminary cleanup plan estimated to cost more than $30 million. EPA Region 8 is considering a derivation of Alternative 7A2 (dam and partial sediment removal) for formal proposal as the cleanup plan.

As part of this review and according to new guidance, EPA has asked the State of Montana, other Site trustees (Salish and Kootenai Confederated Tribes and the U.S. Fish and

Wildlife Service), the Atlantic Richfield Company, and the Technical Assistance Grant group (the Clark Fork River Technical Assistance Committee) to submit comments and input for the Board's review. In its presentation materials for the NRRB, EPA Region 8 has indicated positions of other, key stakeholders. An August 28 internal EPA review meeting is planned. In September, the NRRB will provide comments to the Region regarding the cleanup plan EPA Region 8 is considering proposing to the public. EPA Region 8 will take these comments into consideration as it develops the Proposed Plan.

Schedule

EPA encourages the public to continue to be involved as we move toward a cleanup decision for the Milltown Reservoir.

August 2002	CFS available; NRRB meeting
September	Proposed Plan development
October/Nov.	Proposed Plan released; (60-day) public comment period begins
Nov/Dec. or Dec/Jan	Public comment period ends
Early 2003	Record of Decision issued

For more information: http://www.epa.gov/Region8/superfund/sites/milltowndamou.html

Russ Forba, EPA Project Manager
(406) 457-5042; forba.russ@epa.gov

Diana Hammer, EPA Community Involvement
(406) 457-5040; hammer.diana@epa.gov

Keith Large, DEQ Project Manager
(406) 444-5875; klarge@state.mt.us

Milltown Reservoir Selected as National Superfund Redevelopment Pilot—$40,000

The Milltown Reservoir Sediments operable unit has recently been selected as one of 19 national Superfund redevelopment pilots. Through this program, EPA is collaborating with Missoula County and will provide $40,000 in redevelopment expertise to the Milltown-Bonner community. These funds are tied to redevelopment activities around the Superfund Site. There are a number of redevelopment possibilities in the area, some of which have been identified through past planning efforts (1996 Two Rivers Community Forum and the 2001 Two Rivers Restoration Proposal). The funds can be used to facilitate redevelopment discussions in the community and the formation of a Superfund redevelopment group. Ideally, this group would be broadly representative of the community and its various perspectives. Area residents interested in participating in these discussions and possibly joining the new Superfund redevelopment group, should watch for more information and an introductory meeting in the coming weeks.

BOI022170004.DOC/LH

US EPA Region 8, Montana Office
U.S. Federal Building
10 West 15th Street, Suite 3200
Helena, Montana 59626